

and are a critical operational reserve for our armed forces. Today's National Guard accounts for more than 460,000 service members from every state in the Union—roughly 25 percent of all of our 1.9 million-member force.

The Guard has also become an essential part of our nation's response to both man-made and natural disasters. This August, when Hurricane Irene slammed the East Coast, the National Guard responded by calling up over 11,000 soldiers and airmen from 24 states to coordinate the relief efforts. Our Guard is being trained to respond to chemical, biological, nuclear and radiological attacks. It is being trained to deal with pandemics. It is asked to be the first on the scene after major earthquakes, snowstorms, and hurricanes. These homeland defense responsibilities will continue to increase, as well.

The National Guard also brings capabilities and efficiencies to the table that we need in these tough economic times. For example, the Air National Guard provides 35 percent of the total Air Force capability for seven percent of the cost. And, the Army National Guard provides 40 percent of the Army's capability for just 11 percent of the Army budget. Together, 464,900 members of the National Guard provide a capable, operational and affordable military force—at just six percent of the Pentagon's annual budget.

The absence of the National Guard from the Joint Chiefs of Staff has very real consequences. Full membership of the National Guard in the Joint Chiefs could have better prepared the Marines' response to the 1992 riots in Los Angeles, our nation's initial response to the 9/11 attacks, or our response to Hurricane Katrina.

In October of 2005, the Government Accountability Office called into question the Army National Guard's ability to carry out its domestic mission. Then, just like now, there is no permanent system in place to replenish necessary equipment once it is removed from Guard units in individual states. And, the Pentagon has required National Guard units to leave behind critical equipment in Iraq and Afghanistan. A drastic shortfall in equipment levels has led to a drop in mission readiness. As a result, the Guard's ability to respond to domestic emergencies has been severely inhibited. I find it hard to believe this would be the case if the Guard had a seat at the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

With no seat at the table, the National Guard Chief must rely solely on active duty military leaders to make funding decisions. Under the circumstances, General McKinley can do nothing to stop the Joint Chiefs if they put recommend cutting a key program or ignore an opportunity to maintain critical operational capability.

In many ways, the Guard has earned the right to be in the room. Today, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau wears four stars. He attends regular Joint Chiefs meetings. While I understand that General McKinley enjoys a good relationship with Chairman Dempsey, personalities can't be everything. Now, it's time to give the National Guard a seat at the table. We need to make sure the National Guard has the voice it needs—not just to protect its capability, but because of its increasingly active role in overseas operations, because of its role in homeland security initiatives, and because of the cost efficiencies it can offer in these turbulent economic times.

Ultimately, I understand that change is hard. Some may argue that these changes are not necessary. Some may argue that the National Guard does not deserve a seat at the table, that the National Guard is well-represented on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or that the National Guard has the resources it needs.

Critics may say that elevating the National Guard would provide a "second voice" to the Army and Air Force. That is wrong. The National Guard's participation would be no different than that of the Marine Corps, which is both part of the Navy and has its own seat on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Today, as we all know, the Commandant is a valued member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and no one would argue that his advice over the last 30 years has not been valuable.

Some may counter that elevating the National Guard could muddy the Guard's dual commitments to member states and the federal government. In reality, it would not alter lines of authority, but better enable the Guard to provide unfiltered advice on its capabilities and resources. The Guard wouldn't just have its domestic responsibilities—it would have the capabilities, clout, and access to do them better.

Critics may also say that the Chief of the National Guard Bureau has no budgetary authority, but that argument is misleading. The role of the Joint Chiefs is to provide sound, useful advice to the President. In fact, the perspective of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau could save our country billions of dollars. Earlier this year, for example, the Air National Guard Bureau offered a proposal that would have saved up to \$42 billion. Unfortunately, the Air Force dismissed it almost immediately—likely, I've been told, for turf reasons. That would not have happened had the Chief of the National Guard Bureau been able to make his case, offer his perspective, and share his expertise with our planners at the Pentagon. The National Guard can help the Pentagon cut costs without cutting capabilities—but only if it is an equal partner in the decision-making process.

Some may argue that a seat on the Joint Chiefs of Staff would give the National Guard too much influence at the active-duty components' expense. But we know better than that. Look at the size of the services' Congressional liaison staff, the military fellows in our offices and the attaches in the halls—or even the number of Senators, including many on this Committee, who are former active-duty service members. An enhanced role for the National Guard would not diminish the active-duty services' clout among lawmakers.

Now is the time to give the National Guard the voice it needs on the Joint Chiefs of Staff and to give the President a broader perspective of the capabilities and resources at his disposal. Now is the time to use all of the tools in our arsenal to create a more secure homeland.

Mr. Chairman, Senator McCain, Members of the Committee—thank you for holding this hearing. I look forward to swift passage of the Guardians of Freedom Act. And thank you to my good friend, Senator Leahy, for his leadership on this important issue.

We have given the National Guard the right to be in the room. Now, let's give them a seat at the table.

Thank you.

RECOGNIZING CONTRIBUTIONS OF COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise today in honor of National Community Foundations Week. This week, we recognize the millions of Americans who have joined together to make their communities a better place through donations of their time and resources. The generosity and willingness of individuals to work together for the common good has been a hallmark of the

American character since our Nation's founding.

Every day volunteer organizations across the country make substantial contributions to our Nation's well-being in countless areas—from education and the arts to economic development and environmental protection. Many of these associations are community foundations—local charitable organizations formed to provide financial support to valuable programs across their communities. Last year alone, community foundations gave approximately \$4 billion to various local non-profit activities.

Led by private citizens, community foundations provide effective support to communities across the United States, often supplementing both public and private programs to provide their friends and neighbors with the maximum level of support necessary to build strong and vibrant communities. With 700 community foundations across the Nation, they are one of the fastest growing forms of philanthropy in the United States.

One such community foundation which exemplifies the virtues of charity and giving back is the New York Community Trust. Established in 1924, the New York Community Trust is one of the oldest and largest community foundations in the Nation—providing \$141 million in grants to community organizations in 2010 alone. The trust currently invests in various programs to build a better New York, such as helping to reemploy New Yorkers through the New York Alliance for Careers in Health Care, NYACH, a project that assesses gaps in the labor market and provides workforce training to both assist individuals in getting in-demand jobs and simultaneously alleviate the skills gap in the health care industry. Through its commitment to the Juvenile Justice Advocacy and Action Project, the New York Community Trust is also dedicated to finding alternatives to prison for nonviolent, delinquent youth. The trust's grants are also cleaning up the Harlem River, removing tens of thousands of pounds of debris from Swindler Cove and transforming it into a 5-acre park with a children's garden and a boathouse.

Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing this week of November 12 through November 18, 2011, as National Community Foundation Week so we may continue to honor the important work that charity and private citizens play in making our Nation a better place.

END UNNECESSARY MAILERS ACT

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I firmly believe that members of the public must have access to the information contained in annual consumer confidence reports, which are required by the Safe Drinking Water Act's right-to-know provisions. For the past 11 years, the Environmental Protection Agency has required community water systems